

The Last Thing She Ever Told Me

(excerpt)

by

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Original Screenplay

On some inexplicable whim, Robert drives across the country to tell Leslie Hall that leaving her was the most disastrous decision he ever made. Unfortunately he finds not one, but *two* Leslie Halls. Unable to decide which woman is his ex....

EXT. RURAL AMERICA DAY

Pan over a lonely stretch of Western American Backroad.
On the horizon - a ten building town.

Title: Langdon, North Dakota
Population 236

MAIN STREET of the town that the Interstate and the modern world passed by. We move past Colette's Coffee Shop, Jerry's General Store, a post office. Moving in on Sam Bukowsky's SERVICE STATION

In closer - on SAM - 50's, crusty, the definitive existential gas man of the American Hinterland. He sits in a rocking chair, reading the paper. Sam lowers the paper, looks down the road - west. Looks down the road - east. Nods significantly. Raises the paper - reads.

INT. / EXT. COURTYARD DAY

Tracking along a 2nd story balcony that overlooks a courtyard of an old colonial building. Rusting iron railing, mildewed paint flaking off crumbling stone walls.

Gradually we hear sounds, a distant cacophony of laughter and voices, slowly growing more distinct. Spanish? Yes. Voices of madness.

Title: Cali, Colombia

We're inside an end of the world mental asylum. The voices and mad laughter fade into a distant FOG HORN. We continue tracking along the balcony, past a series of closed on the other side of the courtyard. We stop at one -- and move in slightly. The fog horn seems to be coming from inside the room.

INT. ROOM

Close on ROBERT'S FACE. 30. Angular, handsome. Short hair, slightly messy. Hard blue-grey eyes, disturbingly calm and vacant. He gazes at something far in the distance.

ROBERT'S POV: a crumbling stone wall inches from his face. We hear the fog horn again -- only gradually realizing that it's coming from him, an almost impossibly deep resonance. Behind him, we hear of the cell door unlocking. Robert doesn't register it.

An ORDERLY in a white knee length coat enters. He unceremoniously plops a bowl of food onto the floor. He approaches Robert, smiling wolfishly. Spanish:

ORDERLY

Your ship come in?

Robert doesn't seem to hear him.

The Orderly drifts around the cell. Toilet, army cot. Stuck to the wall is newspaper PHOTO of an Air China jet seeming to pass within feet of a Hong Kong slum. On the bed is a spanish BIBLE, and a thick tattered JOURNAL. The Orderly thumbs through it -- the handwriting growing increasingly erratic. Dozens of pages are torn out and lie crumpled mess in the corner.

ORDERLY (Span)

How's the novel coming along?

Robert makes another deep fog horn sound. Orderly walks over, bends down so that his head is next to Robert's.

ORDERLY

Hey *huera*, what do you see out there?

Robert stops the fog horn sound, as though he's spotted something. The Orderly waits in anticipation.

Robert slams a FIST into the Orderly's nose -- springs up and catches him before he hits the ground -- out cold.

His eyes still a bit glazed -- Robert lowers the Orderly onto the cot. Reaches into his white jacket, pulls out a

HYPODERMIC and vial of fluid. Shoves the hypo in, draws fluid out -- taps it -- jabs the needle into the man's leg. The Orderly melts comfortably down into the cot for an hour's nap.

Robert picks up the BIBLE. Slashes the inside jacket of the book with the hypodermic. The book cover is false -- stuffed with \$100 bills.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

A busy street in Cali, Colombia. Throngs of people on their way home. Some distance away in the crowd -- a glimpse of a WHITE JACKET -- a Orderly's attire.

It's ROBERT, moving calmly with the crowd. He casually glances behind him, then slips into a passageway and out of sight.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - NIGHT

Title: San Francisco

Tracking through a debutante party: men in black tie, women in evening gowns, champagne glasses perched, bright voices, laughter. Slightly heightened, grotesque.

TO A MAN AND WOMAN standing to one side -- distinct from everyone. Looking on, shaking their heads -- trying to keep from laughing.

MICHAEL is early 30's. Quick, dark, handsome, and not taking the world all that seriously. His girlfriend:

LESLIE HALL is 29 - with intriguing looks that later become beautiful. Long dark hair. Cheekbones - she's got em. Penetrating grey eyes you could disappear into. Worried eyes that say her mind is often in two or three other places.

They're nicely dressed, but slightly less so than everyone else. We now see a banged up nikon CAMERA hanging from Leslie's shoulder.

MICHAEL

Yes siree Bob, we got some serious high maintenance here, huh? A veritable marital minefield. I feel like I might get hitched just standing here.

LESLIE

That feeling will pass.

MICHAEL

I hope so. -- How bout this guy here?

Michael nods toward a very eligible looking MAN hanging onto a young WOMAN'S every word.

MICHAEL

Think he's gonna meet the one tonight?
(Leslie shakes her head)
Think he's gonna get some action tonight?

LESLIE

Who cares?

MICHAEL

Hey Leslie, it's news. All of the Bay Area cares.

Michael taps the SF EXAMINER ID CARD on her camera strap.
Leslie shakes her head, disgusted.

MICHAEL
Like him for instance.

Across the room - a rather narcissistic BACHELOR by the bar, drink in hand -- eyes gazing intently at the female forms passing by, committing their figures to memory.

MICHAEL
I'll bet he cares.

LESLIE
Maybe. Go find out.

Leslie watches Michael drift over to MAN'S side and subtly get his attention.

MAN
Hello.

MICHAEL
Hi. Michael Whaley.

man
Bob Thornton.

Firm handshakes. -- Then Michael looks at the man curiously.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry, have we met?

MAN
I don't.. think so.

MICHAEL
That's strange. You look familiar.

MAN
I don't know.

LESLIE eases her camera off her shoulder - photographs Michael and the Man.

MAN
What do you do, Michael?

MICHAEL (deadpan)
I'm a dancer.

MAN (at a loss)
Really? -- Like... modern?

MICHAEL

Not exactly. -- I work at a place
called George's.

MAN

(almost choking on his drink)
The club on Polk street?

MICHAEL (smiling)

You know the place? --
(conspiratorially)
I've seen you there, right?

On Leslie smiling: photo-ing the Man's speechless
expression.

LESLIE

Nice one.

EXT./INT. NIGHT

Title: Las Flores, Colombia.

Pitch black. The whir of an engine. Gradually we see that
we're inside the COCKPIT of a beat up single engine
airplane. Over radio:

MAN'S VOICE

Vaya.

Outside the plane, two rows of colored christmas lights
spookily click on -- dimly illuminating a dirt AIRSTRIP.

The plane surges forward, picks up speed, shakily takes
flight. Gradually the ins-trument lights illuminate the
PILOT -- a strung out looking cowboy. He reaches into an
ashtray, lifts out a half smoked joint, lights it up --
the smoke drifting over to ROBERT -- sitting beside him.

ROBERT (Spanish)

How long til we're across the border?

PILOT

Veinte minutos.

Robert nods anxiously -- not sure he can wait that long.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET DAY

A black Mercedes cruises through a nice neighborhood.

INT. CAR SAME

CU of of a DRIVER'S LICENSE in a wallet.
The name on it: LESLIE HALL.

But the face is NOT THE SAME LESLIE HALL we saw earlier.
The person holding the wallet slips out the driver's
license. Behind it is ANOTHER LICENSE with the same photo,
but a different name: NICOLE GIREAUX.

The Mercedes pulls up in front of an extravagant house.
A man's voice - in FRENCH:

MAN
A bientôt, Leslie.

This 2ND LESLIE HALL steps out of the car.

She is *stunning*. Looks that could single-handedly cause
coup d'etat in countries she's never even heard of. Tall,
slender, dark hair. Wears an elegant dress/suit outfit,
sunglasses and black gloves. A large black BAG hangs over
her shoulder. She reaches the Mansion Front Door. Rings
BELL. No answer.

Leslie pulls out some lock picking equipment - goes to
work.

INT. MANSION

Leslie enters - hears a BEEPING ALARM signal. Moves
quickly to it. Alarm Insignia: Tri-Yex Security Systems.

We now see that she wears a single EARPHONE.
In French:

LESLIE
I'm inside. Let me have it.

INT. OLD WAREHOUSE

Long shot: a MAN sitting at a desk with his back to us.
He speaks into a 2-WAY RADIO:

MAN (French)
2 - 5 - 4 - 8 - 9 - 9 - 1.

INT. HOUSE

Leslie hits the appropriate buttons - de-activates the
alarm. Opens her shoulder BAG - removes two small
BRIEFCASES. Unfolds them: they're large collapsible
suitcases. Talks to herself in English. She's American.

LESLIE

Okay. Let's see what we got here.

She passes a PHOTO of the mansion's husband/wife owners - posing in a Venetian canal-side CAFE -- having a lousy time.

LESLIE

What a drag. Drop a buncha dough getting to Venice and he's still the same jerk you've always been married to.

Leslie moving through the house where decadence ran amok.

LESLIE

Too many material possessions.

Someday you people will realize I'm doing you a favor here.

(lifts a WALK-TV off a table)

Like this - do you really need this?

I don't think so.

(bags it)

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET DAY

Avenue D. People hanging out, dealing dope, etc.

ON ROBERT walking down the street in a state of profound culture shock. He still wears the ORDERLY'S JACKET from earlier. By New York standards, Robert looks reasonably normal. But the way his eyes dart to from object to object on the street -- it's obvious that something's not clicking exactly right in his head.

He stops by a garbage can, drops the jacket into it. On the ground beside the garbage can is a quarter. He picks it up. Walks straight over to a PAY PHONE -- makes a call. Intercut with:

INT. EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT

KARL 30 appears. A laid back guy with hallucinogens in his not so distant past. He answers the phone.

KARL

Hello.

ROBERT

(suddenly at a total loss)

Uh hello..... I'm sorry - I've completely forgotten who I'm calling

here.

KARL (amazed)
Robert?

ROBERT
Yeah - that's right.... Who are you?

KARL
Karl.

ROBERT (recovering)
Oh yeah - I knew that.

KARL
So you're back in the country, huh?

ROBERT
(looks around)
Judging by the block I'm standing on
- it's hard to say for sure.

KARL (concern)
How ya doing?

ROBERT (all's well)
Fine. Listen, you wanna have a drink
at the Beauregard?

KARL
Why not? I'm just about done around
here. You far from there?

ROBERT
You know, ten minutes if nothing
grabs my attention along the way...
fifteen if it does.

KARL
Okay, see you in fifteen minutes.

EXT. STREET DAY (San Francisco)

Outside the Mansion that LESLIE/THIEF is robbing:

A banged up RENAULT parked with its hood open.
A Man tinkers with the engine. Over a 2-way radio:

LES/THIEF (o.s.)
(F) How's it look out there, Luc?

LUC the lookout emerges from under the hood. Lean, a two day beard and a Rajik cigarette in his mouth. He looks around.

LUC (into radio)
(F) All quiet.

INT. MANSION

Leslie goes through woman's vanity - sweeps up assorted jewelry. Checks drawers: underwear, socks. She eyes the bottom drawer. Pulls it completely out.

LESLIE
Don't try this at home, folks.

She reaches into the empty space, pulls out an envelope. MONEY inside. Over the Radio:

LUC (o.s.)
We might have a problem.

EXT. MANSION

A WOMAN (youthful 50) in a Mercedes convertible pulls up just outside. She hops out -- moves quickly to the front door.

LUC (radio)
Okay, get ready.

Luc discreetly draws out a Beretta 9mm.

INSIDE

Leslie pulls out a Walther 9MM. Creeps toward the front door. Pulls a stocking from her jacket, covers her head.

OUTSIDE

We see that the WOMAN is the same one seen earlier in the Venice photo. She inserts a key into the front door.

LUC
Okay. She's going in. I'm coming right behind her.

LESLIE (o.s.)
No. Wait. let's see how this goes.

LUC (pulls up)
Okay. Your signal. -- One tap for 'yes'.
Two taps for 'no'. -- You read me?

INSIDE

Leslie taps her microphone once: 'yes'.
Just then, the WOMAN steps inside.

Leslie rolls to the floor beside the couch. Watches as the Woman moves toward the alarm panel, pulling up short -- puzzled that it's not armed.

LUC (o.s.)
Does she notice the alarm?
(one tap: yes)
Is she suspicious?

WOMAN (exasperated)
Goddammit, Walter.

As though this isn't the first time.

Leslie taps her microphone twice.

The Woman thumbs through the mail. Looking down at something she strides across the living room -- right toward at Leslie. Leslie rolls again to stay out of sight. The Woman pauses right beside her -- absorbed in the LETTER.

LUC (o.s.)
Is she close to you?

Leslie taps once and mouths to herself: *oh yes*.
Woman moves on into an ADJACENT OFFICE -- still visible.

Leslie eyes the front door -- looking for a chance to make a run for it. She's about to go. Her PHONE rings. The Woman walks back past Leslie -- answers it.

WOMAN
Hello.

LUC (o.s.)
Who's she talking to?

Leslie starts to tap an answer, but shrugs.

LUC
Is it the alarm company?

WOMAN (annoyed)
Yes, I'm *on the way*. I just stopped by to pick up the contracts. Walter, you forgot to turn on the alarm again.
(Leslie taps the mike two times)

Yes, you *did*... Look I'm not going to stand here arguing with somebody who's losing his mind. I'll see you downtown.

She hangs up. Grabs some papers. Goes to the alarm panel. Leslie taps her microphone several times.

LUC
What? You want me to come in?
(two taps: no)
She coming out?
(one tap)

The Woman re-sets the alarm and leaves. Outside, the Mercedes starts up and drive off. Leslie exhales.

LUC (o.s.)
Okay, she's gone.

Leslie stands up. Immediately the MOTION SENSORS pick her up. The preliminary alarm signal starts beeping.

LESLIE
Shit!

She rushes over to the ALARM PANEL.
The LCD readout is counting down: 16, 15, 14...

LESLIE
Let me have that code again.

Silence over the radio. 13, 12, 11..

LESLIE
Any time!

INT. WAREHOUSE

Long shot: the MAN glimpsed earlier - shuffling madly through papers.

MAN
Attende!
(finds it)
2 - 5 - 4 - 8 - 9 - 9 - 1.

INT. MANSION

Leslie punches in the last number just before the LCD hits zero. She swings around and sinks down against the wall.

LUC (o.s.)
You wanna abort?

LESLIE
You kidding, I'm on a roll here.

TO KITCHEN

Leslie goes to the REFRIGERATOR - opens it up.
Opens a to go container: pizza. Yum.

Munching on a slice - she opens the freezer.
Takes out three frozen packages. Flicks open a
switchblade. Cuts open...
1ST PACKAGE: Ground beef.
2ND: Chicken Breast
3RD: paper stuffing, and.... something GOLD.

LESLIE (into radio)
Jean Paul - can you give me a lift?

MAN'S VOICE
(F) Thirty seconds.

INT. MANSION DOWNSTAIRS

Leslie/thief closes her now fully packed suitcases.
A car horn honks. A yellow TAXI waits outside.

EXT. MANSION

JEAN PAUL drops leslie's suitcases into the taxi's trunk.
Jean looks like Luc's older brother but this is purely
coincidental.

They drive off - past LUC - who shuts the Renault's hood -
pretending not to notice them.

INT. MOVING TAXI

A Sig Sauer automatic rests on the front seat beside Jean.

LESLIE (F)
How's it going?

JEAN PAUL (F)
The same. Same as yesterday...
Same as the whole week really.

Jean Paul reels off the following philosophy without any
particular enthusiasm - just the facts.

JEAN PAUL

These people who tell you the world's changing so fast...

(shrugs dismissively)

Maybe it's a nice day and your radio reception is a little better than usual. Perhaps you got laid that morning... or maybe you tried but couldn't... or more likely you didn't even bother to try but just drank something passing for coffee and minded your own fucking business.... This is not change. This is eternity looking you right in the eyes...and yawning.

Leslie's a little surprised by this sudden exi-philosophical burst.

LESLIE

So uh.... what'cha been reading these days, Jean?

EXT. SMALL AMERICAN TOWN DAY

Title: Carlton, Kansas.

Main street of a town caught in a 1950's time loop. Population 2992, and falling fast.

THE 76 Truck Stop - Gas pumps, garage, and a DINER.

INT. DINER

Lunch rush. Truckers in John Deere caps eating 100% all beef burgers. Waitresses with big hair - move with purpose.

ON LINDA - waitress. 21, red hair - very pretty. An amazing surplus of energy - a woman on the go. She steps over to a big trucker reading a menu.

LINDA

Yeah - that comes with hash browns and toast.

(looks quickly around the room)

But just between you and me - you can substitute biscuits if you like, or even an English Muffin. I know people inside who can arrange it.

(beat -- seeing something)

Who's the gal?

TO TRUCKER'S ARM: big TATTOO of a WOMAN.

TRUCKER
My first wife.

LINDA
(looking closely)
She's a nice looking lady.

TRUCKER
Yeah.

Trucker looks solemnly at the tattoo. A man with regrets.

INT. TAXI DAY (SAN FRANCISCO)

JEAN and LESLIE/THIEF drive the taxi toward the S.F. BAY waterfront. Through trucks, loading piers. Into:

INT. OLD CREEPY WAREHOUSE

Crates, forklifts. Men unloading cargo from a black van. Jean parks beside LUC, who sits on the hood of his Renault.

FRANCOIS, 43 - the ringleader - appears. He's a handsome elegant French Connectiony looking guy. He sits at his control center desk - computer, two-way radio, loaded ashtrays and unmarked wine bottles. He opens the taxi door for Leslie. Takes her hand, kisses it - a bit sleazily.

FRANCOIS (F)
Let's see what we have here.

INT. BEAUREGARD CAFE AFT. (N.Y.C.)

Vintage 1940's bar. The real thing.

KARL and ROBERT sit in a booth - drinking beer and smoking. Robert's eyes drink in the place in a state of semi-elation. Karl looks on in quiet wonder.

ROBERT
(in medius riff)
In the last five years, the cost of living in New York has risen 23 percent... whereas the price of beer here at the Beauregard has held absolutely steady - which is a wonderful thing. On the other hand, there's something a little suspicious about it too.

Robert nods to a SUSPICIOUS LOOKING GUY at the payphone - mumbling.

ROBERT

I'm starting to think that there's more going on here than meets the eye.

TO MAN at the bar who looks like he's packing a gun. He whispers into a WOMAN's ear. She nods solemnly and walks out.

ROBERT

Like who knows what that was about? -
- I'm starting to think that everything you see -- is just a front for.. something else altogether.

Karl nods -- somewhat dazzled by Robert's rap.

KARL

Yeah? Fine with me.

ROBERT

This is good. This is very good... I like this place. I would go so far as to say this bar's the only reason to live in this city.

INT. CAR NIGHT (San Francisco)

LESLIE / PHOTOGRAPHER and MICHAEL (driving) in a spiff '65 mustang -- cruising Hunter's Point, a rough neighborhood.

Leslie is visibly relieved to be out of the debutante party and into the mean streets. The physical dangers of this world somehow less threatening than the glamorous world she just left.

Her camera rests ready on the window sill -- her eyes lit up, darting around looking for a target. She almost looks like a patrolling soldier. She lifts her camera and shoots a young man who's pressed against a wall by two COPS.

MICHAEL (joking)

This is more like it, huh?

Leslie nods, not catching Michael's tone. Michael looks over -- a hint of concern in his face.

MICHAEL

Boy, if I had to pick a husband from that deb party, I think I'd put a

bullet in my head.

Leslie is too absorbed to respond. She shoots:
MAN standing beside the road holding up a bible -- saying
nothing. Waiting for someone to take the word from him.

MICHAEL

Hey I saw Jeffrey Wright the other
day.

LESLIE (puzzled)

Who?

MICHAEL

The guy who runs Pigale. He asked me
when you're gonna bring by some of
your work.

(no response)

I think if you played your cards
right, he'd do a show with you.

LESLIE

(recoiling slightly)

I'm don't have anything that's...

She can't put a finger on it. Bad subject. Michael shrugs.
They drive slowly past a demented angel -- a MAN in
tatters, gazing up into the sky -- his right hand moving
through air as though he's conducting an orchestra.

MICHAEL

Jesus, this neighborhood's the end of
the line, huh?

LESLIE (distant)

Yeah.

But her eyes are locked on the CONDUCTING MAN.
She's addicted to this world.

INT. FRANCOIS' WAREHOUSE

Jean and Luc work on the 'taxi': removing the roof service
light and license plates. Spraying the car down with
water. The yellow paint washing off.

FRANCOIS walks over to LESLIE/THIEF. Hands her a small
stack of MONEY. She quickly counts off the bills. Angry:

LESLIE

(F) You gotta be joking!

FRANCOIS

(F) Not at all.

LESLIE

I'm the one going inside those places. I take the risks and you screw me.

Francois doesn't answer. Instead he leans very close to Leslie. Reaches out and gently caresses her ear lobe -- toying with the EARRINGS she's wearing -- hypnotized. Looking like he'll either kiss Leslie -- or jerk the gold right out of her ear.

FRANCOIS (soft)

Beautiful earrings.

Leslie struggles to remain perfectly still.

EXT. STREET NIGHT

Michael and LESLIE / PHOTOGRAPHER sit on a bench. They look a little out of place: nicely dressed in the middle of this rough area. Michael pulls two Budweiser tallboys from his knapsack, opens them.

MICHAEL

Hey I don't care what those fucken euro pussies say: this is the king of fucken beers. -- You get some good stuff?

Leslie doesn't seem to hear him.

MICHAEL

What's up?

LESLIE

-- Just thinking....

Leslie makes a motion with her hand -- like the CONDUCTING MAN from before: leading his imaginary orchestra.

QUICK FLASH: a b&w photo image of the conducting man -- seeming to mimic Leslie's gesture.

LESLIE

Guy's got gold fillings for sure.

MICHAEL (puzzled)

What?

LESLIE (impulse)
 -- I'm gonna quit the Examiner.

MICHAEL
 What?! -- That's a good gig, Leslie!

LESLIE (shrugs)
 It's burning up too much time.

MICHAEL
 Yeah well, jobs have a way of doing that.
 (gentler)
 -- I'd think about it first.

LESLIE
 I've been thinking. --
 I've been thinking that....

She drifts.

MICHAEL
 Where are ya Les?

LESLIE (foreboding)
 Something's happening here.

Whatever it is, she's lost in it.

LESLIE
 This is not how I remember my life.

Michael puts down his beer, takes Leslie's face gently in his hands, gently turns him toward her. Kisses her on the lips. Healing. Soft:

MICHAEL
 You know maybe you oughta go away for awhile.

LESLIE
 Yeah, but where?

Nowhere to run.

INT. BEAUREGARD CAFE (NYC)

KARL and ROBERT still drinking beers. Robert on a semi-manic roll.

ROBERT
 I hate to make sweeping generalizations, but the French are

way over-rated. The problem with somebody like Jacques Derrida is that he obviously hasn't spent any quality research time in dive bars like this. Hell, he wouldn't even know what to order here. -- And he'd have no idea what to make of this guy.

Nods to a white haired OLD-TIMER wearing two WRISTWATCHES.

ROBERT

Mickey Mouse windups, 1952. He told me once if they ever both run down, I'm gonna meet my maker. -- I wonder if that's true.

KARL

-- So how was Colombia?

ROBERT (unflappable)

I don't know - Colombia makes me a little nervous. Everybody's so fucken wound up and enthusiastic down there. It's just not natural for a Latin American country.

KARL

What exactly were you doing there?

ROBERT (even)

Just needed to get away for awhile.

As though Colombia were the logical destination for that.

Robert very rarely gives any outward sign that something is seriously out of sync in his world.

ROBERT

You know on my way over here I was thinking... that's why I was a little late. -- I was thinking that there are a lot of people in this neighborhood that don't seem... quite right in the head. You know what I mean?

KARL (even)

Yes I do.

DEBRA, waitress - comes up with two beers that Karl and Robert apparently did not order.

DEBRA

Here you go.

ROBERT
What's all this?

DEBRA
Don't worry, they're on me.

KARL
Thanks Debra.

DEBRA
Couple of farewell drinks.

KARL
You goin somewhere?

DEBRA
No. Didn't you hear? 2 a.m. tonight
we give last call forever...Monday
morning they start turning all this
into a big parking garage.

She goes. Robert is stunned. Then, with finality:

ROBERT
Well, that settles that.

INT. APARTMENT NIGHT

Karl's place - messy, comfortable. Apparently Robert's been storing stuff here. He packs clothes and books into a beat up leather suitcase. KARL looks on, speechless. His reaction to Robert's demeanor has moved from curiosity to outright concern.

ROBERT (riffing)
The other thing about Colombian taxi
drivers is that they're not really in
the business of giving you a ride.
They work by the hour for the state -
- so they have absolutely no
incentive whatsoever to pick up
anybody. So there you are standing by
the road, just watching them shoot
past you -- feeling like a black guy
in midtown.

KARL
(totally perplexed)
The fuck are you doing?

ROBERT
-- Packing.

KARL

Yeah I can see that. Where you going Robert?

ROBERT (nonchalant)

Well, I thought I might just drive down I-80 -- heading west.

KARL

Let me get this straight: Beauregard is closing and so - you're leaving.

CU ROBERT'S EYES:

No, Beauregard's is far from the whole story here.

ROBERT (logical)

Yeah.

KARL

Okay.

ROBERT

It's good timing actually. Because back at the bar, at the very moment the waitress put down those beers, Leslie flashed through my head.

(worried look on Karl)

I forget, have you guys ever actually met?

KARL

-- No.

ROBERT

-- No. I always think that everyone I know - knows each other. But they never do.

Robert takes out one of his books, opens it.

A PHOTOGRAPH is inside. He hands it to Karl. We never see the photo.

ROBERT

Leslie's... an old girlfriend...

KARL (abrupt)

I know who she is, Robert.

(softening)

She's lovely.

ROBERT

That's exactly what I was thinking,

sitting there, sipping my last
Beauregard beer, thinking: it'd be
nice to go out there and just... see
her. You know?

KARL (darkens)
You don't wanna do that.

The way Karl says this -- it sounds like this Leslie chick
is trouble.

ROBERT (shrugs)
I gotta.

KARL
-- What're you gonna do when you get
there?

ROBERT (as
though it's obvious)
Tell her what a fool I was.
Ask her if she'll take me back.

INT. LESLIE/THIEF'S APARTMENT (SAN FRANCISCO)

Leslie/Thief is living in the style to which she has
become accustomed. Terrific view, sparse yet elegant
furnishings, an 18th century Khazak rug that would set you
back about \$68,000 -- unless, of course, you stole the
thing.

LESLIE THE THIEF sits on a couch reading 'Finnegan's Wake'
and looking totally baffled, which is understandable.
(Anybody who tells you they've read it cover to cover is
lying.)

LESLIE
(trying it aloud)
I suppose on account of my being
jewess looking he used to amuse me
and all the DoYLES said wasn't I the
born fool to believe all his blather
about Irish home rule and the land
league sending me that long stroll of
a song out of the Huguenots in French
to be more classy O beau pays de la
Touraine that I never once sang.

She tosses the BOOK across the room - banging it off the
wall.

LESLIE
 (sarcastic)
 Blather is right.

Then something catches her eye.
 She goes and picks up the book.

A SMALL PHOTOGRAPH sticks out of the pages.
 She slips it out - gazes at it. We don't see it.

EXT. GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE NIGHT (N.Y.C.)

A white '62 chevy IMPALA zooms across the bridge.

INT. CHEVY

ROBERT drives - tapping the wheel to Glen Miller Band.
 Behind him - the Manhattan skyline recedes. Robert gives
 the city one of those backward papal waves.

ROBERT
 New York.... it's been surreal.

EXT. STREET NIGHT (SAN FRANCISCO)

Looking in through a big restaurant window. A MAN and
 WOMAN sit inside at a candlelit table - sipping capuccino.
 They're young, good looking, healthy, wealthy and so in
 love it makes you want to throw yourself off a tall
 building.

TO - THE STREET OUTSIDE

LESLIE / PHOTOGRAPHER looks in window at the happy couple.

LES/PHO.
 You ever wanna shoot people like
 that?

TO MICHAEL (her boyfriend) -- standing beside her.
 They wander off down the street.

LESLIE
 Tell me what you think of this....
 I was out this morning getting some
 shots. Talking to this guy - down on
 Stockton....

TO: EXT. S.F. STREET DAY

We see the story that Leslie/pho. tells:

San Francisco's Little Saigon.

Leslie stands in front of open air fish market - talking to an VIETNAMESE MAN 50's who runs the place. A throng of pedestrians move past.

LESLIE'S (v.o.)
Getting his story. Came from Saigon.

NEWS FOOTAGE: THE FALL OF SAIGON

Pandemonium in the streets, looting, thousands of people rushing aimlessly, suitcases in hand, nowhere to run. Soldiers stripping off their uniforms and guns, fleeing.

A mob of people surging outside the AMERICAN EMBASSY. Helicopters rising off the roof.

LESLIE (v.o.)
Got out just before the fall.

BACK SAN FRANCISCO

The MAN at the market, telling Leslie/Pho. his story.

LES/PHO. (v.o.)
Made it to San Francisco, opened the shop. Life's been good. -- Then all of a sudden...

The Vietnamese man laughs - then spots something across the street. His face goes blank. He crosses the street.

LESLIE (v.o.)
...he just walks away.

He stops in front of an VIETNAMESE WOMAN 50's, standing motionless in a sea of pedestrian traffic, staring at him.

LESLIE
He hadn't seen her since April 29, 1975. Not since the morning he'd saved himself -- pushed his way onto the helicopter, leaving her behind.

We see a strained reunion of two people who are obviously ex-lovers.

LESLIE
I slipped on the telephoto lens and got to work.

Various Shots: Her hand barely touching his shoulder - his

face turned toward the ground, expressionless. Her half smiling. Him shaking his head slowly.

LESLIE
Went on for five minutes like that.
They never noticed me.

Without a goodbye, the WOMAN walks away.

The MAN stands there, dumbstruck, watching her go -- until she is finally swallowed up by the crowd of pedestrians.

He then crosses back over toward LESLIE.

LESLIE
He returned in a fog - and didn't say
anything for a long time.

END FLASH -- BACK TO THE PRESENT

LESLIE finishes the story. Still off in her other world.

LESLIE
So, what do you think? Should I
destroy the film?

Leslie is visibly haunted by the entire episode. Michael is haunted as well -- but not by the Vietnamese couple. He's haunted by Leslie. He gently takes her in his arms.

INT. ROBERT'S CAR DAY

Robert drives down a farm road - whistling, taking it all in. Passes a BILLBOARD: 'Think while you Drive'

ROBERT
Trust me - I am.

EXT. 2ND SAN FRANCISCO MANSION DAY

LESLIE/THIEF picks the lock of the front door - enters.

INSIDE: She punches buttons on the TRI-YEX ALARM.

INT. MAN'S BATHROOM

LESLIE
Well look here.

She spots the owner's WEDDING RING - starts to drop it into her bag - then reconsiders. Sets the ring back on the

counter.

LESLIE (to owner)

You owe me.

She passes a bathtub you could do laps in.
Beside it - a refrigerator. Inside: bubble water,
champagne, Cokes and...

LESLIE

Here's what I want.

Pulls out can of BUDWEISER. Flips tab - nothing happens.
She shakes the can. Doesn't sound like beer - something
RATTLING in there. She grabs the top of the can.

It TWISTS -- like a jar lid - suddenly coming off and
dropping:

A spectacular DIAMOND-ENCRUSTED GOLD NECKLACE.
Attached to it: a golden easter egg.

Leslie hits a catch on the egg. It opens.

Inside: a small oval gold-framed PHOTO of Czarina
Alexandria Romanov - Rasputin's girlfriend.
The one the Bolsheviks did in.

Leslie stares at it - absolutely dumfounded...

MAN'S VOICE

What's going on?

Leslie jumps - then recovers.
It's her RADIO - LUC speaking English for once.

LESLIE (into Radio)

(F) Nothing - I'm almost done.

TO BEDROOM

A much less calm Leslie rifles through a dresser drawer.
Finds some SOCKS. Stuffs the Czarina NECKLACE into one.
Rolls the other into a small ball. Slips a sock into each
cup of her brassiere. She goes to a full-length mirror.
Covers her eyes with her hands - lets them fall.

LESLIE

Guess where the jewels are?

INT. TAXI DAY

LESLIE in the back seat of Jean's taxi. Her eyes dart to

Jean - then to her reflection in the rear view. Then down to the edge of her brassier.

INT. 76 TRUCK STOP DAY

LINDA (waitress) glides expertly through the diner - dropping off dishes and checks to different tables. She reaches a booth in the corner where a MAN sits - looking down at the menu.

LINDA

Hi, how ya doin?

The Man looks up. It's ROBERT.

ROBERT

Just fine. How are you doin?

LINDA

Well, you know - I suppose I'm doing just fine too.

ROBERT

Sounds good. We're both doing pretty fine, more or less.

LINDA

You know what you want?

ROBERT

Yeah I do, in fact. I'd like a bowl of Chicken Soup with two slices of lemon on the side.... An English muffin with butter on the side... And I would also like a large ice tea, also with two slices of lemon on the side.

LINDA (checking her

pad)

So basically we're talking four slices of lemon?

ROBERT

Yes we are.

LINDA

Okay, I'll be right back with your tea.

ROBERT

Great.

Linda leaves. Robert picks up his book. Opens it - takes out the small PHOTOGRAPH of LESLIE HALL that we glimpsed earlier. He gazes at it - then sets it on the table.

WE STILL DO NOT SEE THE PHOTO CLEARLY.

Linda returns with a foot tall iced tea.

ROBERT
Whoa! That's some tea.

LINDA
We don't fool around here... Good book?

ROBERT
Haven't decided. I'll tell you the next time I pass through here.

LINDA
Who's the picture of?

ROBERT
(matter of fact)
The woman of my dreams.

LINDA
-- You the man of her dreams?

ROBERT
I was - until I took off.

LINDA (mock disgust)
What's wrong with you guys? -- You go back on your hands and knees, maybe she'll forgive you.

ROBERT
I doubt it. She told me if I ever came back - she'd act as if I were a total stranger.

INT. DARKROOM (S.F.)

LESLIE / PHOTOGRAPHER prints a shot.

Swishes a sheet of paper around in a sink full of fluid.
A photo image appears before our eyes:

The LOVERS' REUNION that Leslie described to Michael earlier: The Vietnamese man looks at his ex after twenty plus years, about to speak.

Leslie says the words for him.

LESLIE

You look.... exactly the same.

She's obsessed.

EXT. DAY

Inside a long abandoned DRIVE IN THEATRE. Cracked asphalt, weeds sprouting through. Rusted speaker posts. A huge flaking screen. A collapsing wood fence.

ROBERT'S VOICE

Lotta kissing happened here, folks.

Beyond the fence - Robert's Chevy IMPALA shoots past.

INT. IMPALA SAME

ROBERT

In my mind, I always see you
Leslie... stepping out for cigarettes
and the paper.

MENTAL FLASH

Black and white -- San Francisco street:

Moving along with a WOMAN walking on the other side of the street -- following her without her knowing. We can't quite get a clear view of her.

ROBERT (o.s.)

Making an adventure of it.

END FLASH -- BACK TO ROBERT'S CAR

ROBERT

I can see you perfectly. Your hair,
your hands, your arms, your neck,
your face, your mouth, your eyes.

INT. BATHROOM DAY (SAN FRANCISCO)

A bathroom mirror with a WOMAN'S reflection. She's covering her face with her hands. She suddenly pulls them away - as though trying to catch herself by surprise.

It's LESLIE / THIEF - staring at the mirror.
She's wearing the CZARINA DIAMONDS.

LESLIE
It's you.

EXT. THE GREAT AMERICAN ROAD DAY

ROBERT drives - listening to some AM Radio.
Turns the Impala into

SAM BUKOWSKY'S SERVICE STATION.

Sam sits in his rocking chair - the Bismarck Herald across
his lap. Robert gets out of the car - walks to Sam - who
doesn't looks up.

ROBERT
Afternoon.

SAM
Afternoon..... Fill it?

ROBERT
Yeah, fill it up.

SAM (yells off)
HEY JIMMY, FILL IT UP!!
(softly to ROBERT)
You want him to check under the hood?

ROBERT
Yeah - have him give it a look.

SAM (yelling)
JIMMY - take a look under the hood!!

(silence)
You know what to look for I trust!

Sam seems to have his doubts.

ROBERT
Mind if I glance at your paper?

SAM (handing it over)
Help yourself.

ROBERT
Thanks. (reads)
Boy - how bout that Nancy Reagan?

SAM (gloomily)

The woman just refuses to go quietly.

ROBERT

-- Does Route 83 here go all the way into Bismarck?

SAM

Yep...sixty six miles - that way...
You goin to Bismarck?

ROBERT

No. San Francisco.

SAM

.....Where you coming from?

ROBERT

New York.

That doesn't quite add up for Sam.

SAM

Interesting route you've chosen for yourself.

ROBERT

Well, you know - to really see America you gotta stick to the back roads.

SAM

(whatever you say)
Yeah, that's what I've always said.

ROBERT

...End of the world - San Francisco.

Sam looks that direction.

SAM

Now I wouldn't know about that.

INT. FRANCOIS' WAREHOUSE DAY (S.F)

Francois sits - reading the New China News.

LUC unloads wooden crates from a black van. Opens a crate. It's full of flowers. Beneath the flowers are a dozen assault rifles.

LUC

(F) Where are these things from?

FRANCOIS

(F) The flowers?

LUC

The guns.

FRANCOIS

Czechoslovakia. Did you know that
before 1989 - 53% of Czechoslovakia's
trade exports were arms related?
(wistful)
That's all over now. No more arms -
no more Czechoslovakia.

JEAN PAUL drives into the Warehouse in a Black BMW, parks
- gets out. Opens rear door. A MAN in a trench coat gets
up off the floor - hops out.

MOMENTS LATER - AROUND A TABLE

Jean, Luc, and Francois sit listening to the trench coat
man. He's JERRY - a skinny computer whiz up to no good.

To Jerry's open briefcase - assorted electronic gear and
a folder with the Insignia: TRI-YEX SECURITY AGENCY.

FRANCOIS (English)

It's out of the question!

JERRY

Look - I'm not saying you've got to
close shop permanently. You just need
to take a little break. Lay low
awhile.

FRANCOIS (derisive)

Lay low?

JERRY

The Agency's very upset by your
little run of luck. And if you wanna
know the truth - I'm not so fucken
thrilled myself. I get you the alarm
override codes for twenty places.
Nobody ever said anything about
hitting three of them in twenty four
hours.

FRANCOIS

We thought we'd get them out of the
way.

JERRY

Yeah, well now TRI-EX wants you out

of the way. And nothing would make them happier than for you to take just one more pass at the cookie jar.

FRANCOIS

What's the problem? We visit a few of their houses - take a few things. It's small change. Why should they lose sleep?

JERRY

I'll give you 3.5 million reasons why.

Jerry opens the TRI-EX folder - takes out a PHOTO. Tosses it to Francois. It's the CZARINA JEWELS that Leslie/thief stole. Francois looks at it a long time. Quietly and lethally:

FRANCOIS

Putain.

MOMENTS LATER -- SAME

Luc and Jerry guy sit at the table.

Francois and Jean stand off in the distance - arguing softly in French. Francois gets the last word in. They walk back toward the table. Jean walks a bit behind - shaking his head unhappily.

FRANCOIS (to Jerry)

I've come around to your way of thinking. We definitely have a problem. And you...

Francois pulls out a GUN - casually blows a hole in Jerry's forehead. Jerry flies backward in his chair and hits the floor -- thud.

FRANCOIS

(F) are not the solution.

EXT. BASEBALL PARK DUSK

A small ballpark surrounded by pasture land. The pitcher checks the catcher's signals. Pitcher nods. He's got a good feeling about that one. He winds up - throws.

Batter swings - hits the ball deep.

The center-fielder goes back - way back - to the fence...

BEYOND THE FENCE

Robert's IMPALA shoots by. We follow the Impala - without waiting to see where the baseball lands.

INT. IMPALA

ROBERT

You should have been there Leslie. I was standing beside the road - watching the kid fill up my tank. Don't know why - but the look on his face made me realize there was something I forgot to tell you....

All of a sudden, he looks very sad. And just as quickly it passes. He smiles cheerfully.

Robert has the disturbing ability to shift emotional gears from depression to elation - almost instantaneously.

Robert drives past GINNY'S - a 24 hour road side CAFE.

ROBERT

Forgot to tell you about Ginny's Cafe, where time stopped in 1949.

MENTAL FLASH

resuming from before: again furtively following a WOMAN walking down the San Francisco street -- moving closer to her, but never quite seeing her face. The woman comes to a stop outside a diner.

ROBERT (o.s.)

-- And forgot to tell you that diner waitresses... are the last American heroes.

END FLASH -- TO ROBERT driving away.
DINER SOUNDS slowly fade in.

INT. DARKROOM NIGHT (S.F.)

The DINER SOUNDS continue.
Red darkroom light. Pan down a row of WET PHOTOS hanging to dry on a string: shots taken in an old fashioned diner.

TO LESLIE/PHOTOGRAPHER - looking down intently at a white sheet of paper she's swishing around in a pan of

developing fluid. Out of the white, an IMAGE fades into view:

A DINER WAITRESS. CU her eyes.
She's 30 going on 50 -- watching her youth slip away.

WAITRESS (v.o.)
Who's got scrambled?

EXT. BAY BRIDGE DAY

ROBERT's IMPALA crosses the BRIDGE - toward SAN FRANCISCO.

ROBERT
Still here.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREETS

Robert driving through: Chinatown, Fisherman's Wharf,
past a Trolley Car climbing a steep hill.

EXT. MISSION DISTRICT DAY

A half trendy, half rough and ready Latin neighborhood.

Robert's Impala rounds the corner and pulls up to a curb.
Robert gets out - takes an old leather suitcase out of the
trunk. He goes into a building: the Mission Hotel.

INT. MISSION HOTEL LOBBY

A take-it-as-it-comes CLERK/MAN 38 sits behind the desk -
reading The Lady in the Lake by Raymond Chandler.

Robert walks in - fascinated with the details of the
1920's era lobby - beveled mirrors, carved wood trim,
marble floors, high ceilings - all a little rundown at
this point.

CLERK
Afternoon.

ROBERT
Yes it is. -- Nice place. Nice
pressed tin ceiling. Those were the
days, huh?

Clerk does a slight 'whatever you say' lift of the
eyebrows.

CLERK

Would you like a room?

ROBERT

Yes I've got a reservation I believe.
Simms. Robert Simms.

CLERK

(mildly surprised)
Yeah, here it is. We've got you in
314 which is facing Mission St. --
(ironic)
It's got a view.

ROBERT

Great.

CLERK

Let me get you your keys.....
here you go.

ROBERT

Thanks. Are you Stan?

Clerk looks down at his NAMETAG that says `Stan'.

CLERK

Yes, I am.

ROBERT

Well Stan, here's the thing. I've
been driving all night so I'm gonna
take a little nap. I was wondering if
you could give me a wake up call.

CLERK/STAN

Certainly, at what time?

ROBERT

Sunset.

STAN

When it gets dark?

ROBERT

No, the moment the sun goes down.

STAN

-- Well you see sir, with all the fog
and the hills, it's hard to know for
sure exactly when that happens.

ROBERT

I see your point...
Have you got a paper?

STAN

I do.

ROBERT

You think you could check the weather section and see what time the sun sets? It's very important.

STAN

Uh - yeah - I'll take care of it... You like me to get someone to carry your bags up to your room?

ROBERT

Yeah sure - what the hell?

STAN

My sentiments exactly.

Stan rings the desk bell.

INT. MISSION HOTEL ROOM DAY

Moving through the hotel room we see: a couple things Robert had in his cell back in Colombia: the PHOTO of the plane flying through the Hong Kong Slums, his beat up JOURNAL, and a BIBLE. The Bible, however, is new.

ROBERT lies on the bed -- staring at the ceiling.

ROBERT

What are you doing?

EXT. OLYMPIA CAFE DAY (S.F.)

FRANCOIS and LESLIE/THIEF sit in a booth drinking coffee and talking.

INT. CAFE

Leslie lights up a cigarette.

FRANCOIS

(F) So that's the plan.

LESLIE

(F) It'll go like clockwork....

FRANCOIS

Just like the others.

He smiles at her - menacingly. Leslie smiles right back.

FRANCOIS

Do you believe in pure coincidence?

LESLIE

Why?

FRANCOIS

The house on Pacific we hit last week?

(Leslie nods)

Seems that later that same day - another party also broke in and stole a... Russian relic valued at around 3.5 million dollars. -- Extraordinary, no?

Francois stares at Leslie - waiting for her to crack.

LESLIE (cool)

What do you think - I'm gonna steal some 'Russian Relic' and just let it sit in my underwear drawer until things blow over?

FRANCOIS

I imagine you've hidden it some place much better than that.

LESLIE

Well hell - this is exciting news! Unless I go AMEX crazy - 3.5 million should keep me in the style I'm accustomed to for a long time.

FRANCOIS (even)

If I don't have the thing by midnight - you'll get accustomed to having a extra hole in your head.

Waiter comes over - refills their coffees, lingers. Francois' look tells him to fuck off. So he does.

LESLIE

I smell a grift here. That house we hit - we took em for several thousand bucks. But what did it really cost them?

(she makes a Zero sign)

They're in good hands. They just call up their Mutual of Omaha Man. He writes them nice fat seven digit check. Why? Because when he did their policy, the people showed him some priceless jewel or something. The

Omaha Man took a picture of it - then went back to the office with his little picture - and *trusted* these people. Total Strangers. -- You see what I'm saying here?

You're a scumbag Francois. Frankly, I wish I *had* stolen some jewels from you. -- Somebody's conning you. It's probably your computer whiz Jerry.

FRANCOIS (very calm)
About all Jerry's conning is a bunch of toxic shellfish at the bottom of the Bay.
Maybe you two should go into business together.

Leslie takes that in - gets up.

FRANCOIS
Where are you going?

LESLIE
Tell the waiter I want some apple pie.

INT. MISSION HOTEL LOBBY DAY

STAN the clerk sits behind desk - reading Chandler. Phone rings. Stan reads some more - then answers - without actually looking up from the book.

STAN
Mission Hotel.....
Hold on sir, lemme check...

Stan puts the phone down, but keeps reading. Picks up the phone.

STAN
No she's not back yet.....yeah, I'll tell her. -- What.... Okay.
(hangs up)
Lunatic.

He looks at NEWSPAPER, looks at WATCH, shakes his head, makes call.

INTERCUT - STAN / HOTEL ROOM

ROBERT lies on his bed - staring at the ceiling. The phone rings. He watches it ring a few times - then answers it -

says nothing.

Mr. Simms? STAN

Yes? ROBERT

It's happened. STAN

Really? ROBERT

No doubt about it. STAN

Okay, thanks - you did great. ROBERT

It was easy. STAN

They both hang up.

ON STAN: He shakes his head in wonder.

Ookay. STAN

INT. OLYMPIA CAFE DAY

FRANCOIS waits for LESLIE / THIEF to return to the table.
Gets suspicious - walks toward the back.

TO RESTROOM DOOR.
Francois reaches inside his jacket for his GUN.

INT. WOMEN'S ROOM

Francois steps inside. It's empty.
He looks up. Over the sink: an OPEN WINDOW.

Salope! FRANCOIS

EXT. STREET DAY

LESLIE/THIEF hanging onto the outside of a CABLE CAR.

Shit - now he's really not gonna LESLIE (to herself)

believe that story.

The CABLE CAR passes ROBERT - who walks down the sidewalk.

WE STAY WITH ROBERT.

He walks along - eyes drinking in the rush of magic hour street life. The action on the street like a drug for him. He absorbs everything much the way LESLIE/PHO. does when she's out shooting on the streets.

A Tie-dye clad 1960's burn out GUY approaches.

BURN OUT

Betcha a dollar you can't guess how many acid trips I've had since '67.

ROBERT (declining)

I don't wanna take your money.

A PAYPHONE nearby rings. Robert walks over - answers it.

ROBERT

Hello.

MAN'S VOICE

Hey - esta' Jose?

ROBERT

No se'. Esperate - dejame check.
(yells to the street)
JOSE!!

The PASSING CROWD stares at Robert - but no Jose-s step forward.

ROBERT

Nah - no le veo.
You wanna leave a *mensaje*?

MAN'S VOICE

No - esta' bien. I'll call back.

ROBERT

Okay.

Robert hangs up. He dials 411.

Intercut: ROBERT / SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR (woman)

OPERATOR

What city?

ROBERT (thrown)
San Francisco. -- Where are you?

OPERATOR
I'm in San Francisco too.

ROBERT
Been here long?

OPERATOR
All my life.

ROBERT
Well don't ever leave. There's
nothing out there.

OPERATOR
What listing can I find for you, sir?

ROBERT
I'm looking for a Leslie Hall.

OPERATOR
Poor thing. Where does she live?

ROBERT
I haven't a clue.

OPERATOR
I've got two Leslie Hall-s here.

This bit of news visibly shakes Robert. He tries to regroup.

ROBERT
Two? That wasn't the plan.

OPERATOR
What can I say? When it rains, it
pours.

ROBERT (earnest)
The one I'm looking for is uh...
absolutely lovely. She's got eyes
that are... eyes like she knows
something, but hasn't decided whether
or not she's gonna tell you.

OPERATOR
(checks screen)
Nothing like that here.

ROBERT
-- Could I have them both?

OPERATOR
 Why not? The first Leslie Hall is at
 1402 Washington. Number's 862-4545.
 Leslie Hall #2 is at 210 Texas St.
 Her number's 751-5184.

Now Robert is totally recovered: calm and unflappable again.

ROBERT
 You've been a big help.

OPERATOR
 Have a good evening.

ROBERT
 Thanks. Hope you do too.

OPERATOR
 Thanks for using Pac Bell.

ROBERT
 Well thanks for being there.

They hang up.

ON ROBERT - looking at his two numbers.

ROBERT
 Now this could get interesting.

INT. LOFT APARTMENT

Title: 210 Texas St.

Warehouse loft. The kind of place that must have been an industrial disaster area at some point, but is now so terrific you're immediately racked with envy.

Skylights, hard wood floor. A line of large bay windows on two sides. To call the place huge would be an understatement. Were it not for the wrought iron columns throughout the room, you could get a decent game of touch football going here.

LESLIE / PHOTOGRAPHER looks at shot of a WOMAN IN A PHONE BOOTH -- waiting for someone to answer.

A PHONE rings. Leslie looks up. It's HER phone.
 The machine picks up.

LESLIE'S MACHINE
 I'm somewhere else. Please leave me a

message.

ROBERT'S VOICE

Hey, Leslie. It's me.

Leslie gazes intently at the machine.

EXT. STREET SAME

ROBERT in the phone booth, waiting for Leslie/Pho. to pick up. He smiles uncertainly.

ROBERT

I'm back. I... I don't even know
where to begin.

INT. INT. LOFT SAME

LESLIE/PHO. staring at the answering machine, waiting to hear more. *Does she know that voice?*

Robert hangs up. Leslie looks puzzled. Who was that?

In a slight daze, she turns back to her work. Stares at nine shots spread across the floor. Some we recognize from her shoot with Michael. YOUNG MAN arrested, the CONDUCTING MAN.

MICHAEL enters quietly. Sees Leslie in her semi-trance state. Concern in his face. And a hint of frustration as well. Michael feeling pushed away. This has been going on awhile.

MICHAEL

What'cha doing?

LESLIE

-- Looking for...

MICHAEL

-- What?

LESLIE

The final shot.

MICHAEL

For?

LESLIE

For this...

Not finding the word for what 'this' is -- she makes a 'line' gesture. Michael nods, gently, wanting into her

world.

MICHAEL

So have you come up with a name for this...

LESLIE

No.

MICHAEL

Well what's the story?

LESLIE

The story?

His question stops Leslie. For a moment. Then she smiles brightly as the answer comes to her clearly for the first time.

LESLIE

Exiles in America.... drifting towards sanctuary.

Michael nods. And treads lightly:

MICHAEL

So when do you think you're gonna finish this....?

A touch of defeat in his voice.

LESLIE (dreamlike)

Soon as I get a shot of sanctuary.

INT. LESLIE/THIEF'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Title: 1402 Washington St.

Leslie/Thief packing, a portable PHONE wedged on her shoulder. Sound of it ringing on the other end. Someone answers.

MAN'S VOICE

Veterans.

LES/THIEF

I'd like a taxi at 220 Larkin Street
- between Washington and Jackson.

DISPATCHER

Five minutes.

Leslie hangs up. Anxiously throws some clothes into an

overnight BAG. She picks up a big copy of 'Crime and Punishment'. The PHONE rings. The ANSWERING MACHINE picks up.

LESLIE'S VOICE

862-4545. Tell me something I wanna hear. (beep)

FRANCOIS (F)

How's your packing coming along? If you'd stuck with your story - your feminine charms might have actually swayed me. You know for someone so smart - you're very stupid. And very predictable.

The 'predictable' gets to Leslie. Francois hangs up. The PHONE immediately rings again. Leslie answers by angrily.

LESLIE

I'm not that fucking predictable.

MAN'S VOICE

I'm with you there.

IT'S NOT FRANCOIS.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. STREET DUSK

ROBERT stands in a phone booth. Smiling -- delighted (and a bit anxious) to be talking to Leslie at last.

ROBERT

Hey Leslie - how you doing?
-- It's Robert.

LESLIE

Who?

ROBERT

Robert.....

LESLIE

Well that narrows it down.
How bout a last name?

ROBERT (patient)

Simms.

Leslie's mental gears spin -- thinking maybe this guy's with Francois.

LESLIE
I'm sorry I don't think I know you.
Who are you trying to reach?

ROBERT
You. This is Leslie - right?

LESLIE
Uh...yes it is but...

ROBERT
Leslie - it's Robert... I'm back from
New York.

She suddenly pulls her dress off over her head --
stripping down to her bra and underwear.

LESLIE
(as though remembering him)
Really? Well what brings you out
here, Robert?

ROBERT
You bring me out here.

LESLIE
Imagine that.

ROBERT
It's been a few years.

LESLIE
I guess so. -- How many?

ROBERT
Five.

LESLIE
Yeah well - that certainly is a long
time.

APARTMENTT: Leslie throws on a t-shirt. Moves to kitchen
area. Dumps box of TIDE detergent into a trashcan.
The stolen CZARINA JEWELS fall out.

ROBERT
Look, I'm sorry about staying out of
touch for so long...

LESLIE
Hey don't worry about it...

She opens a box of Captain Crunch - dumps it. Cereal falls
out - then two PASSPORTS and a roll of money, and a KEY.

ROBERT

I'm sorry about not writing more.

LESLIE

Oh well - I never wrote you too much either.

ROBERT

That's true. Anyway - I was just wondering if...

LESLIE

(suddenly tired of the game)
Listen I'm really sorry, but I don't know you.

ROBERT

Look, I understand how you feel.
You're totally justified.

LESLIE (ironic)

Well that's a relief. Here I was thinking I'm some kind of heartless bitch. So long Robert!
(starts to hang up)

ROBERT

Wait a second!

LESLIE

I'm not who you're looking for!

ROBERT

That's your opinion. Me -- I'm of a different mind altogether. But I think we can both agree that you are Leslie Hall. And I know that I drove all the way from New York to see Leslie Hall. So if you wouldn't mind, I'd like to meet you for a cup of coffee.

LESLIE (rolls her

eyes)

Does this usually work for you?

As they speak Leslie keeps moving:

Grabs a pair of pants - turned inside out.
Sewn into both INNER LEGS are - ZIPPERED POCKETS - invisible from the outside. She unzips the POCKETS - puts the stolen jewels into one - money and passport into the other.

ROBERT

-- So what'd you have planned for tonight?

LESLIE

I was gonna do a little reading.

ROBERT

Yeah, what?

LESLIE

'Crime and Punishment'.

ROBERT (in pain)

You're making a big mistake.

LESLIE

You think?

ROBERT (nods)

Got a nice beginning, mind you. First couple chapters you think: 'this is gonna be a dynamite book.' But then you get into it a ways and realize that all those literary peo-ple have been lying to us from the beginning.

LESLIE

Well I'm sure glad you told me this.

Leslie puts on the PANTS with the hidden jewels. Then a jacket. Opens the icebox - grabs her Walther 9mm automatic.

ROBERT

Honestly - given the choice of reading Crime and Punishment and having a drink with me....

LESLIE

I shouldn't even have to think about it - right?

ROBERT (agrees)

I'll definitely keep up my end of the conversation.

LESLIE

I bet you will.

ROBERT

I'd love to see you.... and just -- see you... I'll be waiting at the Pacific Cafe.

LESLIE
Yeah well have fun. I'm not gonna be there.

ROBERT
(puzzled)
Why not?

Leslie drops a little information - testing Robert - still trying to figure out if he's with Francois.

LESLIE
Why not? I'm having a little trouble with some people is why not.

ROBERT
Oh. -- Well, I can help you with that.

LESLIE
You're a tough guy, huh?

ROBERT
No, but I can talk my way outta just about anything. Just last week - some kid in Bogota tried to mug me. Ended up letting me go just so I'd shut the fuck up.

LESLIE
I believe that.

ROBERT
So what do you say? Pacific Cafe.
It's a well-lit place with all sorts of escape routes.

Leslie's says nothing. She's heard enough.
She goes to the window -- opens up a large wooden chest.
Pulls out a rope ladder, flings it out the open window.
into a courtyard. She tosses her bag out the window,
climbs out onto the sill, phone still in hand.

ROBERT
Leslie... are you there?

LESLIE
Not for long.

Leslie drops the phone to the ground five stories below.

TO: ROBERT hearing the phone crash. His eyes widen.

INT. LESLIE/PHOTOGRAPHER'S LOFT NIGHT

MICHAEL sleeps on the futon. across the room - LESLIE/PHO. sifts through the same Photos that she and Michael looked over previously.

As though replaying their earlier scene in her mind - we re-hear their conversation about the photos:

MICHAEL (v.o.)

So have you come up with a name for this...

LESLIE (v.o.)

No.

MICHAEL

Well what's the story?

LESLIE

The story?....
-- Exiles in America....
Drifting towards sanctuary.

MICHAEL

So when do you think you're gonna finish this....?

LESLIE

As soon as I get a shot of sanctuary.

MICHAEL

-- How about this one?

TO - THE BACK OF A PHOTO - LABELED: 'LOVERS ON ESPRESSO'

Leslie turns over the photo.

Quick glimpse: a man on a street -- walking away, escaping -- glancing back over his shoulder, one last look.

Before we can get a clear look at his face -- we cut to CU of his EYES -- running away.

MICHAEL'S VOICE

This new?

Leslie shudders - a troubled look on her face.

LESLIE

-- No. I took it years ago.

MICHAEL

Could work. You've got your guy here

-- looks like he's just blown it.
 Getting out of there, taking one last
 look back at... we don't know what. -
 - Who is this guy anyway?

Leslie silently mouths her answer.
 Her eyes say she's lying.

LESLIE

I have no idea.

Leslie reaches to a CASSETTE PLAYER - hits stop. Silence.

Then rewind. Then play.
 We hear part of the CONVERSATION again.

It wasn't in her mind at all - but a recording.

MICHAEL'S VOICE

Getting out of there, taking one last
 look back at... we don't know what. -
 - Who is this guy anyway?

LESLIE'S VOICE

I have no idea.

Leslie hits stop - removes TAPE. Sets it alongside other
 TAPES. The other tapes' labels: Diner Life, Deb Strippers,
 Miranda Rights. These are sound recordings of people
 Leslie has photographed.

EXT. S.F. STREET NIGHT

JEAN and LUC drive along in a black BMW.
 Luc shoves an ammo clip into his PISTOL.

They pull up and park around the corner from
 Leslie/thief's BUILDING - the entrance just visible.

Luc starts to get out - but Jean stops him, seeing:

A TAXI passes the BMW from behind. It continues through
 the intersection - vanishes around the corner. On a hunch,
 Jean starts the BMW, follows the taxi.

EXT. SIDE STREET SAME

The taxi stops in the middle of a block.

LESLIE/THIEF appears atop a wooden fence leading into an
 alleyway. She hoists herself over -- and scurries into the
 taxi. It starts off.

Jean and Luc follow in the BMW.

INT. LESLIE/PHOTOGRAPHER'S LOFT NIGHT

MICHAEL sleeps on the futon. LESLIE/PHOTOGRAPHER looks at him. Picks up her camera bag. Slips out of the apartment.

EXT. STREET

LESLIE/PHOTOGRAPHER drives down the street in a '62 Ford Falcon convertible. Her CAMERA resting on the passengers seat, loaded and ready. Eyes devouring everything. Smiling. Back out in the field, in her grace.

INT. MOVING TAXI

LESLIE/THIEF'S TAXI approaches the Greyhound station. Leslie looks back - sees JEAN and LUC following the taxi in the black BMW.

LESLIE (to Driver)
Keep going. I've got a better idea.

INT. PACIFIC CAFE

ROBERT sits alone, drinking scotch. Looks around. He waits - wondering whether Leslie will show.

INT. MISSION HOTEL LOBBY

STAN sits at the front desk -- reading Chandler. A couple of lost looking hippie GERMAN TOURISTS in hiking shorts and flipflops walk downstairs -- talking German. Heading toward the street, they salute Stan.

TOURIST GUY
Ya okay! *Guten* night. Tomorrow.

Stan nods meaningfully and salutes back. The Germans leave.

STAN
Yesirree Bob, an accident just waiting to happen.

INT. PACIFIC CAFE

ROBERT still waits - staring absently into space. Suddenly he snaps out of it. His EYES dart to the ENTRANCE as:

LESLIE THE THIEF - walks in. She spots Robert right away -
- makes a split decision -- and moves toward him.

Robert gets up - just like men did in the old days. He
smiles. He recognizes Leslie. OR SEEMS TO. Leslie smiles
back at him.

*She either recognizes robert as well -- or -- she has
decided that it's presently convenient for her to pretend
she recognizes him.*

LESLIE

Robert.

ROBERT

Leslie.

(They sit)

Have any trouble finding it?

LESLIE

I'm a regular.

ROBERT

Me too. I mean I was.... It's been
awhile.

A WAITER appears. His name is John.

JOHN

Hey Leslie, how ya doin?

LESLIE

I've been worse. You see that Giants
game last night?

(John nods grimly)

They kinda suck lately, huh?

JOHN

Tell me about it.

LESLIE

Lemme have a Budweiser.

WAITER

Regular, right?

LESLIE

Yeah. Light's for pussies.

JOHN (walking away)

Got that right.

ROBERT

Good to see you.

LESLIE (amused)
Good to see you too.

Leslie plunks 'Crime and Punishment' down on the table.

ROBERT
Brought it along huh?
I admire that. Date goes bad....

LESLIE
got something to fall back on.

Robert picks up his pack of camel filterless - starts to offer Leslie one - stops himself.

ROBERT
I forgot. You stopped smoking.

Leslie picks up the PACK - takes out a cigarette, shrugs:

LESLIE
I started again.

But she doesn't say exactly when she started.

Leslie's responses and demeanor are strangely neutral: at first, she neither admits she knows robert -- nor explicitly denies that she knows him.

Robert lights her cigarette - then his. He's a gentleman. Leslie glances anxiously at the FRONT DOOR.

LESLIE
So you've come from New York?

ROBERT
Yep.

LESLIE
Fly?

ROBERT
Drove.

LESLIE
Long way.

ROBERT
My car has very comfortable seats...
The old Impala.

As if she surely remembers. Leslie humors him:

LESLIE

How's she running?

ROBERT

Like a top. -- Took me ten days. I wasn't in a hurry. Kept to the back roads.

LESLIE

Which way'd you come?

ROBERT

Across the northern states. It was nice - though I didn't realize that so much of Idaho was a desert.

EXT. STREET NIGHT

LESLIE/PHOTOGRAPHER on foot now, wandering the Tenderloin section of downtown San Francisco. Montage of her walking/shooting:

A MAN leaning out a 4th floor apartment window -- waiting for someone that's never gonna show.

LESLIE (v.o.)

Thinking about jumping.

Outside a Union Sq. Hotel. A middle aged MAN in an absurd Prussian military type uniform stands at attention, waiting to open up the door for someone who's figured out life better than he did.

LESLIE (v.o.)

Market Street exiles who never left home.

TO: A XXX video shop. A skulky looking GUY emerges, anxiously scans the streets, moves briskly away.

LESLIE (v.o.)

Born in the wrong time and the wrong place. Trying to make it back.

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE PACIFIC CAFE

JEAN and LUC wait in the parked BMW. They simultaneously light cigarettes - snap their LIGHTERS shut.

INT. PACIFIC CAFE

LESLIE/THIEF checks the FRONT DOOR again.

ROBERT
You expecting someone?

LESLIE
(ignoring the question)
Do I look the same?

The question catches Robert off-guard.

CLOSE ON HIS EYES -- swimming, suddenly totally lost, unsure. Then suddenly they clear -- all doubt gone.

ROBERT
Yes. Exactly.

Leslie laughs softly, taking it all in stride.
Taps her BOOK.

LESLIE
So have you actually read 'Crime and Punishment'?

ROBERT
Didn't you believe me?

LESLIE
Thought maybe you were just saying anything you could think of to get me out of the house.

ROBERT
Well I was. But I've actually read it too.

Leslie doesn't look convinced. Robert proves it.

ROBERT
Raskolnikov is a down and out guy who can't get a date. One day he hits the samovar too hard - goes out and kills this old lady who runs a pawn shop. Then the sister comes home so he's gotta whack her too. After that he gets a fever and worries for three hundred pages. -- Am I right ?

LESLIE
I haven't read the thing.
How the hell should I now?

ROBERT
Have I ever lied to you before?

LESLIE (significant)
Just once.

Robert looks down and nods guiltily -- a guy with some stuff on his conscience.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE CAFE

LUC and JEAN PAUL in car - watching the Pacific Cafe.

INT. CAFE

ROBERT looking at two LATIN BUSBOYS flashing some elaborate hand signals to each other across the restaurant.

ROBERT
(to Leslie/Thief)
You ever get the feeling that there's more going on at this place than meets the eye.

LESLIE
Not until now.

ROBERT
-- By the way, I saw Karl the other day.

LESLIE (ironic)
How is Karl?

The irony is not lost on Robert.

ROBERT
Well, truth is, I worry about him. Sometimes he'll go an entire year without ever leaving the stretch of land between Canal and 42nd Streets - - which, let's face it -- starts to mess with your head after awhile.
(suddenly somber)
He didn't think I should come out here to see you.

LESLIE
No? -- But you *did* anyway.

ROBERT (shrugs)
Sometimes there's just no talking a
guy out of a thing.

LESLIE
-- What's Karl up to these days?

ROBERT (puzzled)
You know, I haven't a clue. Sometimes
I wonder if he's mixed up in --
something. You know what I mean? Last
week I'm poking through his fridge
looking for a beer. And I'll tell you
one thing... (*looks around furtively*)
for a guy who never cooks - he's sure
got a lot of mushrooms in the old
vegetable drawer.

Leslie indulges Robert with a smile - but the fun's over.

LESLIE
You know - I sort of like you.

ROBERT
Sort of?

LESLIE
I wanna show you something.

Leslie opens her jacket - exposing her Walther 9mm
automatic.

The gun definitely gets Robert's attention -- but it
doesn't seem to surprise him.

*But with his unsettling ability to quickly shift mental
gears - he looks right into Leslie's eyes and speaks
calmly:*

ROBERT
Are you still mad at me?

LESLIE
I will be - unless you do me a favor.

ROBERT
Name it.

Leslie tests Robert - trying to figure out what he's up
to.

LESLIE
I want you to give Francois a
message.

ROBERT
Sure. What's the message?

LESLIE
Fuck off.

ROBERT (memorizing it)
Fuck off. -- Okay I got it. I've
gotta to ask you something though. --
Who's Francois?